

DSCYF Highlights Suicide Prevention Resources, Project SAFETY Success

September 10 is World Suicide Prevention Day, September is Suicide Prevention and Awareness Month

WILMINGTON – In recognition of World Suicide Prevention Day, the Delaware Children's Department is raising awareness of suicide warning signs and helpful resources, especially during this unprecedented global pandemic.

"COVID-19 has magnified the many stressors families grapple with daily, from financial stress to relationship stress, and so much more. We know that mental health and wellness have been impacted over the last six months and therefore we must be proactive and encourage children and families to reach out if they are struggling," said **Josette Manning, Secretary of the Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families, also known as the Delaware Children's Department.**

"No one has to go through this alone. Reach out to the Child Priority Response Line at 1-800-969-HELP or text DE to 741-741. Help – and hope – is only a call or text away."

Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death nationwide, and second leading cause of death for young people between the ages of 10 and 24. Every World Suicide Prevention Day, observed on September 10, is an opportunity build community and share support. To start, you can use the acronym FACTS (feelings, action, changes, threats, situations) to learn the warning signs for suicidal behavior. You can find more information online [at this link](#), but here are a few examples:

- **Feelings:** Helplessness; worthlessness; fear of hurting oneself or others

- **Action:** Drug or alcohol abuse; talking or writing about death/destruction; recklessness
- **Changes:** (examples) Changes in personality, behavior; loss of interest in friends and hobbies once enjoyed
- **Threats:** Like “I won’t be around much longer”; plans like giving away favorite things; suicide attempts like overdosing, wrist cutting
- **Situations:** Getting into trouble at school, at home, with the law; recent loss through death, divorce; the break-up of a relationship; losing an opportunity, dream

“To our caregivers and teens throughout Delaware – please know that you don’t have to wait to reach out for help. If you are struggling, help is available 24/7,” said **Jill Rogers, executive director of Delaware Guidance Services**, the provider that partners with DSCYF to manage the Child Priority Response Line. “If you recognize any signs of suicidal behavior, please reach out. Our crisis clinicians are training to help families work through crisis situations and direct them to needed resources. Together, we can help Delaware families get through this difficult period.”

In the last few years, Delaware has implemented several youth prevention initiatives as a result of the Project SAFETY grant, a federally-funded suicide prevention program. The grant program concluded in June, but Delaware was able to sustain the following services through community partnerships. Here are some of the accomplishments and outcomes:

- Coordinating more than 27,000 online suicide prevention trainings for school personnel since 2017
- Initiating about 8,000 mental health screenings of youth and screening initiatives at 44 organizations such as schools, mobile crisis units and the children’s hospital
- Bolstering crisis services in Kent and Sussex County
- Providing better coordination of services for youth from inpatient to outpatient care

- Implementing a Crisis Text Line service for Delaware youth; From June 2016 to June 2020, the text line logged 1,744 text conversations and nine active rescues have taken place as a result of text line conversations
- Creating a mental health-focused website – www.mentalhealthde.com – which is now managed by Mental Health Association in Delaware

“We know that Delawareans are in pain; our youth in particular have had to face so many changes to their day-to-day routines and activities. It’s important to check in, ask questions about mental health and just be there for one another. Death by suicide is the most preventable form of death,” said **Yolanda Jenkins, Manager of Provider Services for the Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services and one of the leads on the Project SAFETY grant.**

“I’m grateful for the work of Project SAFETY to help lay the groundwork for these important prevention services. Due to the grant, the Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services continues to offer the Crisis Text Line and partner with the Mental Health Association in Delaware on suicide prevention trainings, among other efforts. I look forward to these continued provider and partner collaborations for Delaware’s children, youth and families.”

If a child or youth is in crisis or contemplating suicide, please seek immediate help. We are in this together, and you are not alone.

“Now, more than ever, it is important that we normalize talking about mental health and asking the tough questions. When it comes to talking about suicide and being concerned about someone’s actions and/or behaviors, it is important that we intervene and get the person the help he or she needs. Never push to tomorrow a conversation you can have today. We must continue to come together as a community and create a safer state,” said **Jennifer Smolowitz, Project Director for**

Suicide Prevention at the Mental Health Association in Delaware.

Please see the below resources:

- **Delaware's 24-hour Child Priority Response Hotline:**
1-800-969-HELP (4357)
- **Crisis Text Line:** Text DE to 741741
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:** (800) 273-TALK (8255)
- **Delaware Division of Substance Abuse & Mental Health Crisis Intervention Services – Mobile Crisis (for those age 18 or older):**
 - Statewide: (800) 652-2929
 - New Castle County: (302) 577-2484
 - Kent/Sussex County: (800) 345-6785
- **Delaware Hope Line:** 1 (833) 9-HOPEDE or (833) 946-7333
- **Mental Health Association in Delaware:** Statewide: (302) 654-6833

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